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EXAMINER

PORTER, RACHEL L

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
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3626

DATE MAILED: 03/22/2005

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

<p><b>Office Action Summary</b></p>	Application No.	Applicant(s)	
	09/642,227	SHIMIZU, YUJI	
	Examiner	Art Unit	
	Rachel L. Porter	3626	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --  
**Period for Reply**

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

#### Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 13 December 2004.
- 2a) ☐ This action is FINAL.                      2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

#### Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-111 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) 58-111 is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-57 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

#### Application Papers

- 9) ☒ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on \_\_\_\_\_ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.  
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).  
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

#### Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All    b) ☐ Some \*    c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
  2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. \_\_\_\_\_.
  3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- \* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

#### Attachment(s)

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)  | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413)<br>Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)   | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)             |
| 3) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)<br>Paper No(s)/Mail Date <u>4/12, 12/13 &amp; 30/04</u> . | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____  |

## **DETAILED ACTION**

### ***Notice to Applicant***

1. This communication is in response to the application filed 12/13/04. Claims 1-111 are pending. Claims 58-111 have been withdrawn from consideration as being drawn to non-elected invention.

### ***Priority***

2. Receipt is acknowledged of papers submitted under 35 U.S.C. 119(a)-(d), which papers have been placed of record in the file.

### ***Continued Examination Under 37 CFR 1.114***

3. A request for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, including the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e), was filed in this application after final rejection. Since this application is eligible for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, and the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e) has been timely paid, the finality of the previous Office action has been withdrawn pursuant to 37 CFR 1.114. Applicant's submission filed on 12/13/04 has been entered.

### ***Information Disclosure Statement***

4. The Information Disclosure Statements filed 12/13/04 and 12/30/04 have been entered and considered by the Examiner. Furthermore, the Examiner has considered Japanese patent 11-25161, which was submitted with the IDS filed 4/12/04, and a

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corrected dated and initialed copy of the signed 4/12/04 IDS will be entered into the application.

### ***Claim Objections***

5. The objection to claims 21-24 for misspelling the term "merchandise" as "merchanidize," is hereby withdrawn due to the amendment filed 12/13/04.

### ***Specification***

6. The amendment filed 12/13/04 is objected to under 35 U.S.C. 132 because it introduces new matter into the disclosure. 35 U.S.C. 132 states that no amendment shall introduce new matter into the disclosure of the invention. The added material, which is not supported by the original disclosure, is as follows: "wherein the opinion information is inputted based on virtual information on the merchandise planning and development information..." This newly added language has been added to claims 1,29,30,55-57.

In particular, the Examiner able to find any support for this newly added claim language, particularly the phrase "virtual information," within the specification as originally filed. It is noted that the Applicant has provided citations to address these new limitations on page 38 of the 12/13/04 response. However, the Examiner was unable to locate support for this terminology in the cited passages as well. As such, the Applicant is respectfully requested to clarify the above issues and to specifically point out support for the newly added limitations in the originally filed specification and claims, or to cancel the new matter in the reply to this Office Action.

***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112***

7. The previous 112, 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph rejections have been addressed with amendments filed 12/13/04. However, new 112, 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph issues have also been raised in the 12/13/04 response.

8. The following is a quotation of the first paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall contain a written description of the invention, and of the manner and process of making and using it, in such full, clear, concise, and exact terms as to enable any person skilled in the art to which it pertains, or with which it is most nearly connected, to make and use the same and shall set forth the best mode contemplated by the inventor of carrying out his invention.

9. Claims 1-57 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph, as containing subject matter which was not described in the specification in such a way as to reasonably convey to one skilled in the relevant art that the inventor(s), at the time the application was filed, had possession of the claimed invention.

Independent claims 1, 29, 30, 55-57 recite limitations that are new matter, as discussed in the specification objection of the present Office Action, and are therefore rejected.

Dependent claims 2-28, and 31-54 inherit the deficiencies of their respective independent claims 1 and 30, and are therefore also rejected.

10. The following is a quotation of the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall conclude with one or more claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming the subject matter which the applicant regards as his invention.

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11. Claims 1-57 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention.

Claim 1 has been amended to recite "opinion information is inputted based on virtual information..." The term "virtual information" is unclear to the Examiner. In particular, it is unclear how "virtual information" is distinct from any other information stored or transmitted by a computerized merchandise planning system. Furthermore, the Applicant has failed to cite specific portions of the originally filed specification or to provide any additional claim language to clarify the meaning of the phrase. For the purpose of applying art, the Examiner will interpret this limitation (i.e. opinion information is inputted based on virtual information...) to mean information is input when an inquiry screen prompts/requests the data from a user as required by merchandise planning and development process.

Claims 2-28 inherit the deficiencies of claim 1 through dependency and are also rejected.

Claims 29, 30, 55-57 recite similar limitations and are rejected for the same reasons outlined in the rejection of claim 1 above.

Claims 31-54 inherit the deficiencies of claim 30 through dependency and are also rejected.

**NOTE:** The following prior art rejections are provided on the assumption that the added limitations are not new matter under 35 U.S.C. 132. However, the Applicant

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must provide a proper traversal of the new matter issues raised in the present Office Action in the Applicant's next response to the present Office Action.

***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103***

12. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

13. Claims 1-7, 29-33 and 55-57 rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Abelow (USPN 5,999,908) in view of Sammon, Jr. (USPN 6,012,051).

[claim 1] Abelow teaches a merchandise planning and development system comprising:

a merchandise planning information notice unit for informing many and unspecified customers of merchandise planning and development information relating to planning and/or development of new merchandise; (col. 9, lines 19-60; col. 16, lines 4-60; col. 17, line 33-col. 18, line 34)

a display unit for displaying the merchandise planning and development information received from the merchandise notice unit, the display unit further displaying an inquiry input screen for allowing the customers to input opinion information on the merchandise planning and development information (Figures 24-25, 30A, 33A, col. 32, lines 51-67; col. 69, lines 21-31)

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an opinion information collecting unit for collecting the opinion information of customers inputted from the display unit information; and (col. 16, lines 4-60; col. 17, line 33-col. 18, line 34)

a merchandise information notice unit for informing the customers of information on merchandise designed according to an analysis of the opinion information. (see abstract; col. 12, lines 20-col. 13, line 2; col. 16, lines 4-60; col. 18, lines 63-col. 20, lines 30; col. 69, lines 17-60)

Claim 1 further recites that opinion information is input based upon "virtual information" on the merchandise planning and development when the inquiry screen is displayed. Abelow discloses a system wherein information is input when an inquiry screen prompts/requests the data from a user based upon the requirements of the merchandise planning and development process (Abelow: Figures 24-25, col. 32, lines 51-67--see 112 rejections)

Claim 1 further recites that the data is transmitted/received via the Internet. Abelow does not expressly disclose how data is transmitted (e.g. via the internet), but does disclose that the Internet is a relevant digital environment for the disclosed invention. (col. 85, lines 20-32) Sammon, Jr. discloses a system for gathering and processing consumer opinions on products, wherein data is transmitted and received over the Internet. (Sammon: col. 5, lines 2-10) At the time of the Applicant's invention, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to modify the system of Abelow with the teaching of Sammon to transmit and receive data over the Internet. As suggested by Abelow, one would have been motivated to include this feature so



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that users could link to relevant data and resources regardless of the location of the data worldwide. (Abelow: col. 86, lines 35-47)

[claims 2-4] Abelow teaches a system for surveying the popularity of various products (i.e. plurality of products) at various stages of the product life cycle, including product launch (i.e. trial products) (col. 9, lines 19-60; col. 16, lines 4-60; col. 17, line 33-col. 18, line 34; col. 18, lines 63-col. 19, lines 49, Figures 16, 22-24). Abelow further discloses that the system provides information on a plurality of new/prototype (i.e. trial) products (abstract, col. 19, line 42-col. 20, line 31—provides support and information on new development on product throughout product life cycle)

[claims 5-6] see Abelow: col. 10, lines 3-14; col. 75, lines 41-61.

[claim 7] Abelow teaches the merchandise planning and development system according to claim 1, wherein said opinion information collecting unit collects the opinion information from said many and unspecified customers, on the basis of the results of electronic inquiry in order to analyze the needs. (col. 27, line 65-col. 28, line 67; col. 35, line 64-col. 37, line 19)

[claims 29] The limitations of claim 29 are substantially similar to those recited in claim 1. As such, claim 29 is addressed by the rejection of claim 1.

[claim 30] Abelow teaches a merchandise planning and development method comprising:

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a merchandise planning information notice step of informing many and unspecified customers of merchandise planning and development information relating to planning and/or development of new merchandise; (col. 9, lines 19-60; col. 16, lines 4-60; col. 17, line 33-col. 18, line 34)

a display step of displaying the merchandise planning and development information received from the merchandise notice unit, the display step further displaying an inquiry input screen for allowing the customers to input opinion information on the merchandise planning and development information (Figures 24-25, 30A, 33A, col. 32, lines 51-67; col. 69, lines 21-31)

receiving the opinion information input by the customers (col. 32, lines 51-67)

an opinion information collecting step for collecting the received opinion information input by customers; and (col. 16, lines 4-60; col. 17, line 33-col. 18, line 34)

a merchandise information notice step informing the customers of information on merchandise designed according to an analysis of the opinion information. (see abstract; col. 12, lines 20-col. 13, line 2; col. 16, lines 4-60; col. 18, lines 63-col. 20, lines 30; col. 69, lines 17-60)

Claim 30 further recites that opinion information is input based upon "virtual information" on the merchandise planning and development when the inquiry screen is displayed. Abelow discloses a system wherein information is input when an inquiry screen prompts/requests the data from a user based upon the requirements of the

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merchandise planning and development process (Abelow: Figures 24-25, col. 32, lines 51-67--see 112 rejections)

Claim 30 further recites that the data is transmitted/received via the Internet. Abelow does not expressly disclose how data is transmitted (e.g. via the internet), but does disclose that the Internet is a relevant digital environment for the disclosed invention. (col. 85, lines 20-32) Sammon, Jr. discloses a system for gathering and processing consumer opinions on products, wherein data is transmitted and received over the Internet. (Sammon: col. 5, lines 2-10) At the time of the Applicant's invention, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to modify the method of Abelow with the teaching of Sammon to transmit and receive data over the Internet. As suggested by Abelow, one would have been motivated to include this feature so that users could link to relevant data and resources regardless of the location of the data worldwide. (Abelow: col. 86, lines 35-47)

[claims 31-33] Abelow teaches a method of surveying the popularity of various products at various stages of the product life cycle, including product launch (i.e. trial product) (col. 9, lines 19-60; col. 16, lines 4-60; col. 17, line 33-col. 18, line 34; col. 18, lines 63-col. 19, lines 49, Figures 16, 22-24). Abelow further discloses that the system provides information on a plurality of new/prototype (i.e. trial) products. (abstract, col. 19, line 42-col. 20, line 31- provides support and information on new development on product throughout product life cycle)

[claim 55] Abelow teaches merchandise planning and development method comprising:

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a merchandise planning information notice step of informing many and unspecified customers of merchandise planning and development information relating to planning and/or development of a plurality of new merchandise on the basis of one concept; (col. 9, lines 19-60; col. 16, lines 4-60; col. 17, line 33-col. 18, line 34)

a displaying step of displaying the merchandise planning and development information received, the display step further displaying an inquiry input screen for allowing the customers to input opinion information on the merchandise planning and development information (Figures 24-25, 30A, 33A, col. 69, lines 21-31)

receiving the opinion information input by the customers (col. 32, lines 51-67)

an opinion information collecting step of collecting the received opinion information input by customers; and (col. 16, lines 4-60; col. 17, line 33-col. 18, line 34)

a merchandise information notice step of informing the customers of information on said plurality of new merchandise designed according to an analysis of the opinion information. (see abstract; col. 12, lines 20-col. 13, line 2; col. 16, lines 4-60; col. 18, lines 63-col. 19, lines 49; col. 69, lines 17-60)

Claim 55 further recites that opinion information is input based upon "virtual information" on the merchandise planning and development when the inquiry screen is displayed. Abelow discloses a system wherein information is input when an inquiry screen prompts/requests the data from a user based upon the requirements of the merchandise planning and development process (Abelow: Figures 24-25, col. 32, lines 51-67--see 112 rejections)

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Claim 55 further recites that the data is transmitted/received via the Internet. Abelow does not expressly disclose how data is transmitted (e.g. via the internet), but does disclose that the Internet is a relevant digital environment for the disclosed invention. (col. 85, lines 20-32) Sammon, Jr. discloses a system for gathering and processing consumer opinions on products, wherein data is transmitted and received over the Internet. (Sammon: col. 5, lines 2-10) At the time of the Applicant's invention, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to modify the method of Abelow with the teaching of Sammon to transmit and receive data over the Internet. As suggested by Abelow, one would have been motivated to include this feature so that users could link to relevant data and resources regardless of the location of the data worldwide. (Abelow: col. 86, lines 35-47)

[claims 56] Abelow teaches a computer readable medium for storing instructions, which when executed by a computer, causes the computer to perform:

a merchandise planning information notice step of informing many and unspecified customers of merchandise planning and development information relating to planning and/or development of new merchandise; (col. 9, lines 19-60; col. 16, lines 4-60; col. 17, line 33-col. 18, line 34)

a displaying step of displaying the merchandise planning and development information received, the display step further displaying an inquiry input screen for allowing the customers to input opinion information on the merchandise planning and development information (Figures 24-25, 30A, 33A, col. 69, lines 21-31)

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receiving the opinion information input by the customers (col. 32, lines 51-67)

an opinion information collecting step of collecting the received opinion information input by customers; and (col. 16, lines 4-60; col. 17, line 33-col. 18, line 34)

a merchandise information notice step of informing customers of information on merchandise designed according to an analysis of the opinion information (see abstract; col. 12, lines 20-col. 13, line 2; col. 16, lines 4-60; col. 18, lines 63-col. 19, lines 49)

Claim 56 further recites that opinion information is input based upon "virtual information" on the merchandise planning and development when the inquiry screen is displayed. Abelow discloses a system wherein information is input when an inquiry screen prompts/requests the data from a user based upon the requirements of the merchandise planning and development process (Abelow: Figures 24-25, col. 32, lines 51-67--see 112 rejections)

Claim 56 further recites that the data is transmitted/received via the Internet. Abelow does not expressly disclose how data is transmitted (e.g. via the internet), but does disclose that the Internet is a relevant digital environment for the disclosed invention. (col. 85, lines 20-32) Sammon, Jr. discloses a system for gathering and processing consumer opinions on products, wherein data is transmitted and received over the Internet. (Sammon: col. 5, lines 2-10) At the time of the Applicant's invention, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to modify the method of Abelow with the teaching of Sammon to transmit and receive data over the Internet. As

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suggested by Abelow, one would have been motivated to include this feature so that users could link to relevant data and resources regardless of the location of the data worldwide. (Abelow: col. 86, lines 35-47)

[claim 57] Abelow teaches a computer readable medium for storing instructions, which when executed by a computer, causes the computer to perform:

a merchandise planning information notice step of informing many and unspecified customers of merchandise planning and development information relating to planning and/or development of a plurality of new merchandise on the basis of one concept; (col. 9, lines 19-60; col. 16, lines 4-60; col. 17, line 33-col. 18, line 34)

a displaying step of displaying the merchandise planning and development information received, the display step further displaying an inquiry input screen for allowing the customers to input opinion information on the merchandise planning and development information (Figures 24-25, 30A, 33A, col. 32, lines 51-67; col. 69, lines 21-31)

receiving the opinion information input by the customers (col. 32, lines 51-67)

an opinion information collecting step of the received collecting opinion information input by the customers inputted at the displaying step; and (col. 16, lines 4-60; col. 17, line 33-col. 18, line 34)

a merchandise information notice step of informing the customers of information on said plurality of new merchandise designed according to an analysis of the opinion information. (col. 16, lines 4-60; col. 18, lines 63-col. 19, lines 49)

Claim 57 further recites that opinion information is input based upon "virtual information" on the merchandise planning and development when the inquiry screen is displayed. Abelow discloses a system wherein information is input when an inquiry screen prompts/requests the data from a user based upon the requirements of the merchandise planning and development process (Abelow: Figures 24-25, col. 32, lines 51-67--see 112 rejections)

Claim 57 further recites that the data is transmitted/received via the Internet. Abelow does not expressly disclose how data is transmitted (e.g. via the internet), but does disclose that the Internet is a relevant digital environment for the disclosed invention. (col. 85, lines 20-32) Sammon, Jr. discloses a system for gathering and processing consumer opinions on products, wherein data is transmitted and received over the Internet. (Sammon: col. 5, lines 2-10) At the time of the Applicant's invention, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to modify the method of Abelow with the teaching of Sammon to transmit and receive data over the Internet. As suggested by Abelow, one would have been motivated to include this feature so that users could link to relevant data and resources regardless of the location of the data worldwide. (Abelow: col. 86, lines 35-47)

14. Claims 8,9,11,13,17-24,34,35,37,39, and 43-50 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Abelow and Sammon as applied to claims 1 and 30, and in further view of Murcko, Jr. (USPN 6,578,014).

[claims 8,9,11, and 13] Abelow and Sammon in combination teach a merchandise planning and development system that operates via the internet as explained in the



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rejection of claim 1, but Abelow does not expressly disclose that the system includes a sales booking unit and a price determining unit. However, Abelow does consider pricing information in determining which factors will improve product sales. (Abelow: col. 87, lines 55-56). Murcko teaches a system further comprising:

a sales booking unit for accepting sales reservation of merchandise to be released/sold corresponding to the merchandise information from said many and unspecified customers through the Internet (Figure 12; col. 12, lines 2-27)

a selling price determining unit for determining the selling price of the merchandise based on various market factors, including bidding and auction results (Fig. 12, col. 7, lines 40-60; col. 8, lines 65-col. 9, line 9; col. 28, lines 1-30)

At the time of the Applicant's invention, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to modify the system of Abelow with the teaching of Murcko to accept sales reservations and to allow for fluctuations in pricing depending upon various market conditions. As suggested by Abelow, one would have been motivated to include these features to ensure that the manufacturer of a particular product outperforms competitors. (Abelow: Figure 16; col. 42, lines 33-39)

[claims 17-20] Abelow and Sammon in combination teach an Internet-implemented merchandise planning and development system as previously explained. Furthermore, Abelow discloses a system and method wherein vendors and customers are interconnected, and wherein data (including orders) are transmitted across various types of networks. (col. 9, lines 47-60; col. 41, lines 35-56) However, Abelow and

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Sammon do not expressly do not disclose the use of a sales-booking unit and the transmission of reservation data from the sales booking unit. Murcko teaches a system further comprising a sales booking unit for accepting sales reservation of merchandise to be released/sold corresponding to the merchandise information and wherein customers and sellers transmit sales reservation data over a network (i.e. the Internet) (Figure 12; col. 12, lines 2-27). At the time of the Applicant's invention, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to modify the method/system of Abelow and Sammon in combination with the teachings of Murcko to include the use of a sales booking unit and the transmission of reservation data from the sales booking unit. As suggested by Murcko, one would have been motivated to include these features to provide an efficient pricing system and to encourage free market transactions, which may not otherwise occur (col. 7, lines 41-45)

[claims 21-24] Abelow teaches a system that allows the users to customize various product components. (col. 27, line 65-col. 28, line 67; col. 35, line 64-col. 37, line 19) Abelow further discloses a system that operates via the Internet and includes a display unit as explained in the rejections of claims 1 and 8. Abelow is silent as to whether the (customized component) display unit displays a reservation acceptance screen for allowing the customers to input information on reservations of new merchandise, as the amended claims currently recite. Murcko teaches a system that includes a customized display component, which displays a reservation acceptance screen and allows customers to input information on reservations of new merchandise. (Figures

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17-18, col. 27, line 20-col. 28, line 36) At the time of the Applicant's invention, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to further modify the system of Abelow with the teaching Murcko to include a custom display unit that displays reservation acceptance information. As indicated by Murcko, one would have been motivated to include this feature to provide an electronic message that constitutes a statement of intent, which accurately reflects the customer's interests (col. 3, lines 16-39)

[claims 34,35,37, and 39] Abelow teaches the merchandise planning and development method that operates via the internet as explained in the rejection of claim 30 above, but does not expressly disclose that the method includes the use of a sales booking unit and a price determining unit. However, Abelow does consider pricing information in determining which factors will improve product sales (col. 87, lines 55-56). Murcko teaches a merchandise planning and development method further comprising,

a sales booking step of accepting sales reservation of merchandise to be released/sold corresponding to the merchandise information from said many and unspecified customers through the Internet; and (Figure 12, col. 12, lines 2-27)

a selling price determining step of determining the selling price of the new merchandise based on various market factors, including bidding and auction results (Fig. 12, col. 7, lines 40-60; col. 8, lines 43-67; col. 28, lines 1-30)

At the time of the Applicant's invention, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to modify the method of Abelow with the teaching of Murcko to

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accept sales reservations and to allow for fluctuations in pricing depending upon various market conditions. As suggested by Abelow, one would have been motivated to include these features to ensure that the manufacturer of a particular product outperforms competitors. (Abelow: Figure 16; col. 42, lines 33-39)

[claims 43-46] Abelow and Sammon in combination teach an Internet-implemented merchandise planning and development method as previously explained. Furthermore, Abelow discloses a system and method wherein vendors and customers are interconnected, and wherein data (including orders) are transmitted across various types of networks. (col. 9, lines 47-60; col. 41, lines 35-56) However, Abelow and Sammon do not expressly do not disclose the use of a sales-booking unit and the transmission of reservation data from the sales booking unit. Murcko teaches a system/method using a sales booking unit for accepting sales reservation of merchandise to be released/sold corresponding to the merchandise information and wherein customers and sellers transmit sales reservation data over a network (i.e. the Internet) (Figure 12; col. 12, lines 2-27). At the time of the Applicant's invention, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to modify the method/system of Abelow and Sammon in combination with the teachings of Murcko to include the use of a sales booking unit and the transmission of reservation data from the sales booking unit. As suggested by Murcko, one would have been motivated to include these features to provide an efficient pricing system and to encourage free market transactions, which may not otherwise occur (col. 7, lines 41-45)

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[claims 47-50]       Abelow teaches a system that allows the users to customize various product components. (col. 27, line 65-col. 28, line 67; col. 35, line 64-col. 37, line 19) Abelow further discloses a system that operates via the Internet and includes a display unit as explained in the rejection of claims 30. Abelow is silent as to whether the (customized component) display unit displays a reservation acceptance screen for allowing the customers to input information on reservations of new merchandise, as the amended claims currently recite. Murcko teaches a system that includes a customized display component, which displays a reservation acceptance screen and allows customers to input information on reservations of new merchandise. (Figures 17-18, col. 27, line 20-col. 28, line 36) At the time of the Applicant's invention, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to further modify the system of Abelow with the teaching Murcko to include a custom display unit that displays reservation acceptance information. As indicated by Murcko, one would have been motivated to include this feature to provide an electronic message that constitutes a statement of intent, which accurately reflects the customer's interests (col. 3, lines 16-39)

15.     Claims 10,12,14, 36,38, and 40 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Abelow, Sammon, and Murcko, Jr. and in further view of Palmer ("Fancy Labels, Plain Prices")

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[claim 10,12,14] Abelow, Sammon and Murcko teach a merchandise planning and development system including a price-determining unit, which is sensitive to market factors as previously explained. Furthermore, Murcko discloses the use of discount in the pricing system (col. 28, lines 61-65), but Abelow, Sammon, and Murcko in combination do not specifically disclose that selling price determining unit sets discount rate so that the discount rate of the fixed price gradually increases over time (i.e. the fixed price gradually reduces), and determines the selling price according to the discount rate. Palmer discloses selling method/system whereby the discount rate of a fixed price gradually increases the longer the merchandise remains in stock and wherein the fixed price is based upon the discount rate. (page 18, tag inset; page 20, paragraph 20) At the time of the Applicant's invention, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to modify the teachings of Abelow, Sammon and Murcko with the teachings of Palmer to have the selling price determining unit increase the discount rate of merchandise the longer it remains in stock and determining the selling price based upon the discount. As suggested by Palmer, one would have been motivated to include this feature to encourage the rapid sale/turn-over of merchandise. (Palmer: page. 20, par. 20)

[claims 36,38, and 40] Abelow, Sammon and Murcko teach a merchandise planning and development method including a price-determining step, which is sensitive to market factors as explained above. Furthermore, Murcko discloses the use of discount in a pricing system (col. 28, lines 61-65), but Abelow, Sammon, and Murcko in combination do not specifically disclose that the selling price determining step sets

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discount rate so that the discount rate of the fixed price gradually increases over time (i.e. the fixed price gradually reduces), and determines the selling price according to the discount rate. Palmer discloses selling method/system whereby the discount rate of a fixed price gradually increases the longer the merchandise remains in stock and wherein the fixed price is based upon the discount. (page 18, tag inset; page 20, paragraph 20) At the time of the Applicant's invention, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to modify the method of Abelow, Sammon and Murcko in combination with the teachings of Palmer to have the selling price determining step include increasing the discount rate of merchandise the longer it remains in stock and determining the selling price based upon this discount rate. As suggested by Palmer, one would have been motivated to include this feature to encourage the rapid sale/turn-over of merchandise. (Palmer: page. 20, par. 20)

16. Claims 15-16 and 41-42 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Abelow, Sammon, and Murcko, and in further view of Barzalai (USPN 6,012,045)

[claim 15] Abelow and Sammon in combination teach a merchandise planning and development system that operates via the internet as explained in the rejection of claim 1, but Abelow does not expressly disclose that the system includes a price determining unit. However, Abelow does consider pricing information in determining which factors will improve product sales. (Abelow: col. 87, lines 55-56). Murcko teaches a system further comprising a selling price determining unit for determining the

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selling price of the merchandise based on various market factors (Fig. 12, col. 7, lines 40-60; col. 8, lines 65-col. 9, line 9; col. 28, lines 1-30). At the time of the Applicant's invention, would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to modify the system of Abelow and Sammon in combination with the teaching of Murcko. As suggested by Murcko, one would have been motivated to include these features to provide an efficient pricing system and to encourage free market transactions, which may not otherwise occur (col. 7, lines 41-45)

Abelow, Sammon and Murcko in combination teach a merchandise planning and development system including a price-determining unit, which is sensitive to market factors as explained above. Furthermore, Murcko discloses that the pricing system may be used in combination with other pricing mechanisms such as retail or auctioning systems (col. 8, lines 63-col. 9, line 1), but Abelow, Sammon, and Murcko in combination do not specifically disclose the details of bid collecting and further do not disclose that the selling price determining unit evaluates bid distributions. Barzalai discloses system for collecting bids and auctioning merchandise comprising:

a bidding price collecting unit for collecting the bidding prices of new merchandise to be released corresponding to the merchandise information from said many and unspecified customers; and (Figure 5; col. 12, lines 39-45; col. 13, lines 8-25)

a system component for investigating the distribution of bidding prices on the basis of the result of collection of said bidding price collecting unit and determining the selling price of the new merchandise on the basis of the bidding price zone of the greatest number of bids. (col. 13, lines 8-25; col. 16, lines 24-45—e.g. determines



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when, where, and which price ranges are most popular and allows these factors to influence sales/winning bid decisions)

At the time of the Applicant's invention it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to further modify the system of Abelow, Sammon, Murcko in combination with the teaching of Barzalai. As suggested by Abelow, one would have been motivated to include these features to include benchmarking probes to help vendors determine what product features, like pricing, are popular, and will retain and appeal to a customer base. (Abelow, col. 42, lines 33-39)

[claim 16] Abelow, Sammon and Murcko teach a merchandise planning and development system including a price-determining unit, which is sensitive to market factors as explained above in the rejection of claim 15. Furthermore, Murcko discloses that the pricing system may be used in combination with other pricing mechanisms such as retail or auctioning systems (col. 8, lines 63-col. 9, line1), but Abelow, Sammon, and Murcko in combination do not specifically disclose the details of the auctioning systems and further do not disclose that the selling price determining unit evaluates auction results. Barzalai discloses system for collecting bids and auctioning merchandise comprising:

an auction unit for auctioning new merchandise to be released corresponding to the merchandise information through said network among said many and unspecified customers; and (Figure 5; col. 12, lines 39-45; col. 13, lines 8-25)

a system component for determining the selling price of the new merchandise on the basis of the auction result by said auction unit. (Figure 5; col. 13, lines 8-25; col. 16,

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lines 24-45—e.g. determines when, where, and which price ranges are most popular and allows these factors to influence sales/winning bid decisions)

At the time of the Applicant's invention it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to further modify the system of Abelow, Sammon, Murcko in combination with the teaching of Barzalai. As suggested by Abelow, one would have been motivated to include these features to include benchmarking probes to help vendors determine what product features, like pricing, will retain and appeal to a customer base. (Abelow, col. 42, lines 33-39)

[claim 41] Abelow, Sammon and Murcko teach a merchandise planning and development method including a price-determining step, which is sensitive to market factors as explained above in the rejection of claim 15 above. Furthermore, Murcko discloses that the pricing system/method may be used in combination with other pricing mechanisms such as retail or auctioning systems (col. 8, lines 63-col. 9, line1), but Abelow, Sammon, and Murcko in combination do not specifically disclose the details of bid collecting and further do not disclose that the method evaluates bid distributions.

Barzalai discloses system for collecting bids and auctioning merchandise comprising:

a bidding price collecting step of collecting the bidding prices of new merchandise to be released corresponding to the merchandise information from said many and unspecified customers; and (Figure 5; col. 12, lines 39-45; col. 13, lines 8-25)

a step of investigating the distribution of bidding prices on the basis of the result of collection of said bidding price collecting step and determining the selling price of the

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new merchandise on the basis of the bidding price zone of the greatest number of bids. (col. 13, lines 8-25; col. 16, lines 24-45—e.g. determines when, where, and which price ranges are most popular and allows these factors to influence sales/winning bid decisions)

At the time of the Applicant's invention it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to further modify the method of Abelow, Sammon, Murcko in combination with the teaching of Barzalai. As suggested by Abelow, one would have been motivated to include these features to include benchmarking probes to help vendors determine what product features, like pricing, will retain and appeal to a customer base. (Abelow, col. 42, lines 33-39)

[claim 42] Abelow, Sammon and Murcko teach a implemented merchandise planning and development method including a price-determining step, which is sensitive to market factors in the rejection of claim 15 above. Furthermore, Murcko discloses that the pricing method may be used in combination with other pricing mechanisms such as retail or auctioning systems (col. 8, lines 63-col. 9, line1), but Abelow, Sammon, and Murcko in combination do not specifically disclose the details of the auctioning method and further do not disclose that the method evaluates auction results. Barzalai discloses system for collecting bids and auctioning merchandise comprising:

a step of auctioning new merchandise to be released corresponding to the merchandise information through said network among said many and unspecified customers; and (Figure 5; col. 12, lines 39-45; col. 13, lines 8-25)

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determining the selling price of the new merchandise on the basis of the auction result by said auction step. (Figure 5; col. 13, lines 8-25; col. 16, lines 24-45—e.g. determines when, where, and which price ranges are most popular and allows these factors to influence sales/winning bid decisions)

At the time of the Applicant's invention it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to further modify the system of Abelow, Sammon, Murcko in combination with the teaching of Barzalai. As suggested by Abelow, one would have been motivated to include these features to include benchmarking probes to help vendors determine what product features, like pricing, will retain and appeal to a customer base. (Abelow, col. 42, lines 33-39)

17. Claims 25-28 and 51-54 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Abelow, Sammon, and Murcko, Jr. in further view of Anonymous, "Fresh Cargo Brand Is Renamed".

[claims 25-28] Abelow and Sammon teach an Internet-implemented system and method for allowing consumers to participate in the product design process as explained in the rejection of claim 30. Abelow, Sammon, and Murcko in combination do not expressly disclose that the system/method allow users to vote for the name of a product. However, systems and methods, which allow consumers to select or vote on product names or logos, were well known at the time of the Applicant's invention, as evidenced by the teachings of the "Fresh Cargo Brand Is Renamed" article. Furthermore, at the time of the Applicant's invention, it would have been obvious to one

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of ordinary skill in the art to modify the method/system of Abelow, Sammon, and Murcko in combination to allow consumers to provide feedback on the name of a product via the Internet. As suggested by Abelow, one would have been motivated to include this feature to ensure that corporations interact with customers to provide occasional product improvements when needed to meet sales and revenue objectives. (col. 7, lines 1-9)

[claims 51-54] Abelow and Sammon teach an Internet-implemented system and method for allowing consumers to participate in the product design process as explained in the rejection of claim 30. Abelow, Sammon, and Murcko in combination do not expressly disclose that the system/method allow users to vote for the name of a product. However, systems and methods which allow consumers to select or vote on product names or logos were well-known at the time of the Applicant's invention, as evidenced by the teachings of the Fresh Cargo Brand Is Renamed" article.

Furthermore, at the time of the Applicant's invention, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to modify the method/system of Abelow, Sammon, and Murcko in combination to allow consumers to provide feedback on the name of a product via the Internet. As suggested by Abelow, one would have been motivated to include this feature to ensure that corporations interact with customers to provide occasional product improvements when needed to meet sales and revenue objectives. (col. 7, lines 1-9)

***Response to Arguments***

18. Applicant's arguments filed 12/13/04 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive.

On pages 38-40 of the 12/13/04 response, the Applicant argues that the Applicant's invention distinguishes over the prior art because the prior art only allows the user to provide opinions on products while they are being used.

In response to applicant's argument that the references fail to show certain features of applicant's invention, it is noted that the features upon which applicant relies (i.e., collecting information on merchandise that is not used by potential users (page 38); that the customers do not have access to the new merchandise when an inquiry input screen is displayed (page 40)) are not recited in the rejected claim(s). Although the claims are interpreted in light of the specification, limitations from the specification are not read into the claims. See *In re Van Geuns*, 988 F.2d 1181, 26 USPQ2d 1057 (Fed. Cir. 1993).

19. As to the Applicant's arguments with respect to additional arguments regarding the new features and the Internet implementation of the Abelow reference, these arguments have been considered but are moot in view of the new ground(s) of rejection. These limitations have been addressed in the art rejection provided in the present Office Action.

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***Conclusion***

20. The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure.


- Frost (USPN 5,041,972) discloses a method and system for evaluating consumer product opinions.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Rachel L. Porter whose telephone number is 703-305-0108. The examiner can normally be reached on M-F, 9:30-6:00.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Joseph Thomas can be reached on (703) 305-9588. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 703-872-9306.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

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